

# SEXUALLY REDEEMED

LEARNING TO REST IN THE FINISHED WORK OF THE CROSS



*Sexually Redeemed: Learning to Rest in the Finished Work of the Cross*

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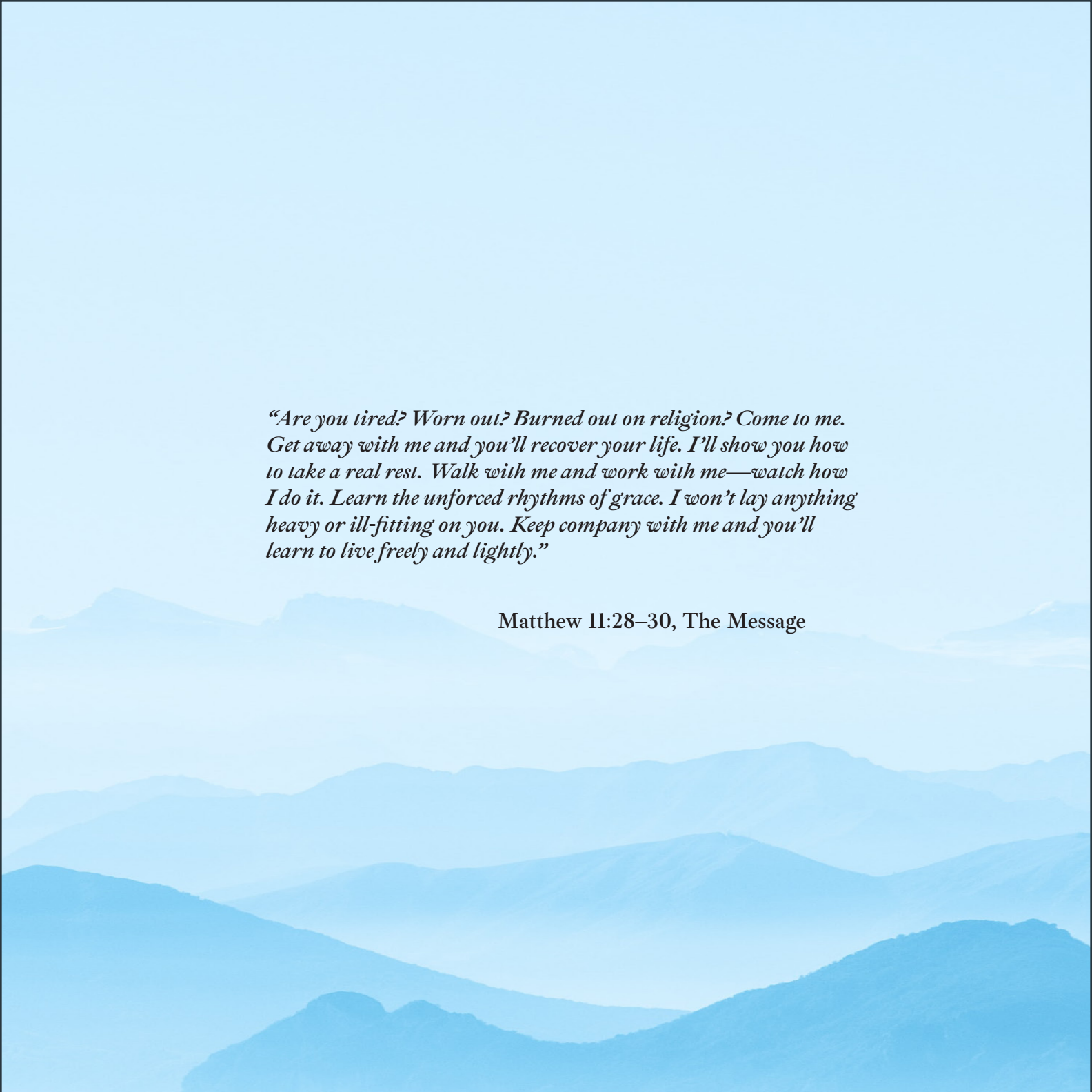
700 Mars Hill Road, Kennesaw, GA 30152

Our Purpose: At Sanctuary, we are being transformed by the gospel to live and love like Jesus.

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*“Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly.”*

Matthew 11:28–30, The Message

# INTRODUCTION

This study is about God. This study is about you. This study is about God's indescribable love for you, a love so deep, so profound, so all-encompassing that He made a way for you to be able to say, "I am His beloved with whom He is well pleased." And it's a study we believe will cause you to fall more in love with Him.

It won't just happen. But you don't have to go looking for anything. You won't have to get sober or discover some new insight. Not with this kind of love.

This study will require something of you. It will require a willingness, a desire, a vulnerability to say, "Yes," and the openness to receive the love Jesus has for you. The love that is here, now, available, and accessible, a love so intimate and present, a love so incomprehensibly beautiful. A love that receives you just as you are, right where you are.

Saying yes will mean facing the lie of shame. It will mean believing (even in a space of unbelief) that His way for you, and for those around you, is best. It will mean agreeing that His truth is true. It will mean fully embracing what's already been done, what's already been given.

At the heart of the gospel, we see that our brokenness doesn't separate us from the love of God. It connects us. Jesus asked a man who had been paralyzed for thirty-eight years a very simple question: "Do you want to get well?" (John 5:6)

As Christians, our reality is that Jesus has already made us well. We are redeemed. We are healed, whole, and holy. We are at once belonging and becoming. Our great challenge is learning to rest in what Jesus accomplished on the cross, learning to live

in the reality of our healing, and learning to give and receive love in the beauty of our holiness.

The paralyzed man responds to Jesus' question with an excuse: "I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred" (John 5:7). Jesus moves past the man's excuse and says to him—and to you and me—"Get up! Pick up your mat and walk" (John 5:8).

What do you say? Let's learn to receive and to rest. Let's learn to walk it out together.

Love you guys,  
cb



# WEEK ONE

IT IS FINISHED



## PART ONE

*It is finished.*

From the cross, Jesus declared victory over sin and death.

*Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.*  
John 19:30

What was finished? What did Jesus finish on the cross? A better question may be, "What didn't Jesus finish?" Or maybe an even better question is, "What started—what began—after Jesus finished paying our penalty, resulting in the ultimate end of sin and death?"

*It is finished.*

"Finished"—*téleios*—meaning "fully finished" or "accomplished to the uttermost."

Jesus made atonement for our sin. His whole life pointed to this one moment, the moment of atonement. It was in this moment, the moment when the wrath of God was poured upon Jesus instead of us—His body fully broken, His blood fully shed—that it was accomplished to the uttermost. In the words of John the Baptist, Jesus' forerunner, when he saw the Savior coming toward him: "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

Jesus provides a way to atone for our sins. Jesus completes it. Accomplishes it. Not in defeat; please, this is not defeat. In an act of heroic triumph, He screams, "It is finished."

We get used to talking about the cross. But friend, what happened on the cross is the



single most important event in redemptive history. What God did on the cross is treat Jesus Christ as if He had committed every single sin ever committed by every single person. The full wrath of God was placed on His Son instead of on you and me.

God the Father is treating His Son as if He had lived your life. And in return, He is able to treat you as if you had lived Jesus' perfect life.

*It is finished.*

The work of reconciling your relationship with God is finished. What Jesus did completely justifies you. What Jesus accomplished completely redeems you, because He is your perfect sacrifice. And because of that, God is completely and utterly pleased with you. On the cross, Jesus declared a complete victory on your behalf, covering all your sins.

All your sins. Your past sexual sin...your current sexual sin...your future sexual sin. It has all been redeemed.

It is finished.

## **REFLECTION**

1. What did Jesus finish on your behalf?

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2. What did Jesus leave undone?

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3. Reflect on this statement: “God is completely and utterly pleased with you.” How are you learning to rest in this truth? What causes you to push back from fully embracing this truth?

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4. How about you? Are you “completely and utterly pleased” with yourself? What is the primary belief you have about yourself—or about the cross—that might cause you to pray, “I believe; help my unbelief”?

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## PART TWO

It is finished. Here's how it started.

*This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, when the LORD God made the earth and the heavens.*

*<sup>5</sup> Now no shrub had yet appeared on the earth and no plant had yet sprung up, for the LORD God had not sent rain on the earth and there was no one to work the ground,*

*<sup>6</sup> but streams came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground.*

*<sup>7</sup> Then the LORD God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.*

*<sup>8</sup> Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. <sup>9</sup> The LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.*

*<sup>10</sup> A river watering the garden flowed from Eden; from there it was separated into four headwaters. <sup>11</sup> The name of the first is the Pishon; it winds through the entire land of Havilah, where there is gold. <sup>12</sup> (The gold of that land is good; aromatic resin and onyx are also there.) <sup>13</sup> The name of the second river is the Gihon; it winds through the entire land of Cush. <sup>14</sup> The name of the third river is the Tigris; it runs along the east side of Ashur. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.*

*<sup>15</sup> The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. <sup>16</sup> And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; <sup>17</sup> but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die."*

*18 The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."*

*19 Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. 20 So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky and all the wild animals.*

*But for Adam no suitable helper was found. 21 So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and then closed up the place with flesh. 22 Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.*

*23 The man said,*

*"This is now bone of my bones  
and flesh of my flesh;  
she shall be called 'woman,'  
for she was taken out of man."*

*24 That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.*

*25 Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame. Genesis 2:4–25*

To describe the perfection of garden life and garden love, the biblical writer uses a two-phrase sentence: "Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame."

They were both naked. Not just physically, but in fullness as created beings. Nakedness here represents complete and total innocence and integrity. There was no vulnerability in this state of nakedness, nothing to be afraid of or exploited. In this state of perfection,

nothing was hidden, nothing in their bodies, minds, or souls. Nakedness was a state of complete freedom.

In his book *The Divine Romance*, Gene Edwards paints the picture this way:

“They are never distracted from one another, for there is no distraction. In their eyes, nothing else exists!

“She has no blemish; she has no wrinkle. There is nothing imperfect in all her being.

“He loves her continuously. And with abandoned, innocent, unbridled passion, she loves him in return.

“She has full confidence in her place beside him. No reassurances need be given that he loves her. She never questions, but totally accepts his love. There is no fear of displeasing him or losing him.

“She is beautiful, she knows that, yet there is no pride. Rather, a deep inward knowing that he is lord of all earth, and she is . . . his perfect mate.”<sup>1</sup>

“And they felt no shame.” In their complete oneness was full transparency.

To describe utter beauty, the writer of the text uses the negation of a word of utter vileness. Shame is universal; every person knows shame is poison; it’s prison. The writer chooses the word “shame” to describe what is not in the garden. Adam and Eve are without shame.

Shame enters the garden at the fall. The consequence is devastating. Shame enters the



hearts of the man and woman, their minds and their souls now fueling every sin-soaked response.

*When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. <sup>7</sup> Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. Genesis 3:6–7*

Shame now rules Adam and Eve. In response to its reign over them, they realize they are naked and try to cover up their nakedness. They cover up to self-protect—from God, from each other, and from their truest selves.

You know shame. You know its power. You know its weight. You know its shape and tone and misery. Shame is the belief and the ongoing threat that the truest part of you is unlovable. Shame says you didn't just do something bad; you are bad.

There is no other sin that carries the constant threat of shame like sexual sin. All sin separates; that's what sin does. But make no mistake, our sexual sin is set apart. Paul implores the church at Corinth:

*Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body. 1 Corinthians 6:18*

Shame whispers to you that you are worthless and unlovable because you look at pornography. Shame reminds you that you are bad, and you will never change.

You are not worthless because you look at pornography. Rather, because you feel you are worthless, you are drawn to pornography. But sexual sin is not the unforgivable sin. It's just not. On the cross, Jesus exchanged grace for shame. You are not worthless; you are worthy. Let me say it again. You are not worthless. You are His beloved.

Brothers, God approaches us in our nakedness to bring us joy, not to express His disappointment in us. His heart is to exchange our ashes for beauty, our mourning for joy, and our despair for praise (see Isaiah 61:3). There is no shame so deep that the love of God cannot reach it. There is no story He cannot redeem. The paradox of the gospel is that our failures do not condemn us; they connect us.

## **REFLECTION**

1. What is God's created intent for your sexuality?

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2. How do you sense God approaching you to heal your sexual brokenness?

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3. Reflect on this statement: “The paradox of the gospel is that our failures do not condemn us; they connect us.” How are you learning to rest in this truth? What causes you to push back from fully embracing this truth?

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4. Describe your posture in engaging with God as His beloved.

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## WEEK ONE EXERCISE: FINAL WORD

The Final Word Project is curated by Brady Smith. The project originated with the desire to photograph the ultimate substance of life. Brady invited his friends, and today we invite you, to come to an understanding of God's Final Word.

Take your time to work through the following questions to help you come to God's Final Word. The following photographs will give you a glimpse into how others described God's Final Word.

1. Do you believe in God?

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2. What do you think of God?

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3. What are some things God might think of you?

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4. What are the top three words God might use to describe you?

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5. What is the one thing you think God most often says about you? Write that word on the duct tape below.



*The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. <sup>17</sup> Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ... Romans 8:16–17a*

## REFLECTION

1. Which photo speaks most personally to you?

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2. What is the primary reason you chose the word you wrote on the duct tape?

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3. How does that word, that belief, get expressed through your body, mind, and soul?

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4. How might your brothers around the table encourage you to lean into the truth that you are God's beloved?

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## SEXUALLY REDEEMED—MY STORY

When did you first come to recognize you had a body?

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When did you begin to see your body as sexual?

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## DISCUSSION

*“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup> Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup> For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”*

Matthew 11:28–30

*Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective. James 5:16*

Share as God leads. Use the following questions if they will be helpful.

1. How do you receive Jesus’ invitation to come to Him? Why is He inviting you in?
2. What is causing you to be weary and burdened?
3. What is currently bringing you life that leads to rest?
4. “And you will find rest for your soul.” How might you live in that truth today?
5. How might your brothers join you in prayer and presence?

## **BENEDICTION—DAVID INNES**

Oh Lord, my God and my Redeemer,

Thank You for saving me, Jesus. Thank You for Your complete forgiveness. Thank You for being my advocate before the Father. Thank You, Holy Spirit, for uttering groans of intercession when I have no words to pray.

You have never left me nor forsaken me as I have walked through relational brokenness. You have comforted me in the valley of the shadow of death, being merciful and kind and protecting me from the deadly intent of evil.

I am grateful today, Father, for the sacrifice You made because You first loved me and are actively at work in my healing,

While I remain prone to selfishness and, in my weariness, lack the faith needed to believe, it is my identity in You alone that brings me hope, the hope of an ultimate victory.

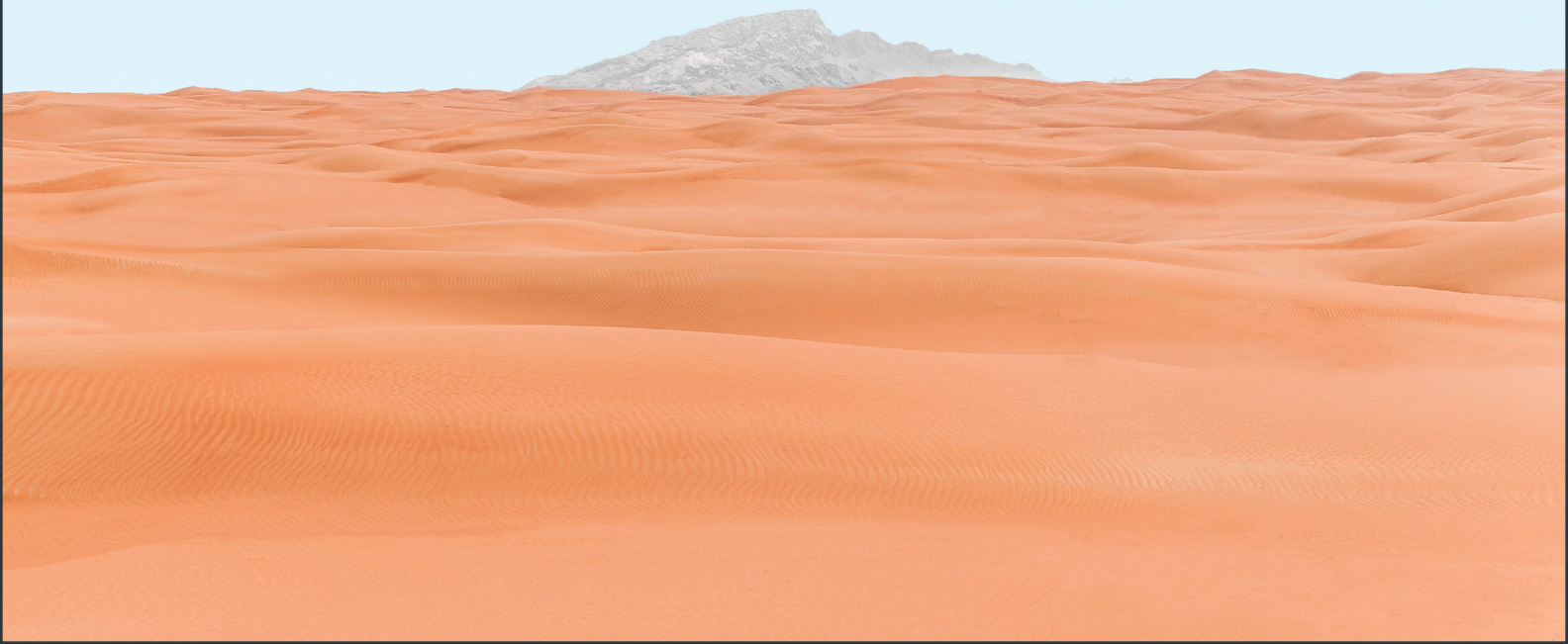
So today, as I strive to embrace the truth of who You are and the vastness of Your love, mercy, and grace, help me also realize that my choices matter to You and to others who cross my path on this journey. As You continue to heal and change me, Jesus, help me to live and make choices from a position of utter gratitude.

I long for the faith to believe You are absolutely enough for me and that I need no one or nothing else. Please strengthen me, Lord, to have the courage to rest in You and not in myself. Your love will never fail me.

Hallelujah!

Amen.

*But now, this is what the Lord says—  
he who created you, Jacob,  
he who formed you, Israel:  
“Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;  
I have summoned you by name; you are mine.  
<sup>2</sup> When you pass through the waters,  
I will be with you;  
and when you pass through the rivers,  
they will not sweep over you.  
When you walk through the fire,  
you will not be burned;  
the flames will not set you ablaze.  
<sup>3</sup> For I am the Lord your God,  
the Holy One of Israel, your Savior;  
I give Egypt for your ransom,  
Cush and Seba in your stead. Isaiah 43:1–7*









# WEEK TWO

BY HIS WOUNDS WE ARE HEALED





## PART ONE

*But he was pierced for our transgressions,  
he was crushed for our iniquities;  
the punishment that brought us peace was on him,  
and by his wounds we are healed. Isaiah 53:5*

“By His wounds we are healed.”

He was wounded because of our sin. He was crushed because of our shame. He became our sin so we could experience His peace. Although our sexual brokenness has ultimately been healed, God is inviting us to learn to actively live and love in the healing of our Wounded Healer.

For many of us, learning to live and love in our healing will require us to “unlearn” both some of the ways we’ve lived and loved in our past and some of the ways in which we are currently living and loving. This “unlearning” includes considering not just the way we love others, but the way we receive the love of others. Our woundedness is the primary roadblock keeping us from moving out of the cul-de-sac of brokenness to live in the openness and adventure of healing.

We are wounded by the sins of others as well as by our own self-inflicted sins. Those who are most deeply wounded are the ones who perpetuate the cycle, continually recreating a society of wounded people. A young man at Sanctuary recently summarized this cycle in one sentence.

“My dad beat religion into me, and then he beat it out of me.”

All wounds come as a result of the fall. For many of us, our wounds can be traced back to three places on the roadmap of our lives.

1. Our own sin.
2. A “father wound” or “mother wound.”
3. An “other wound,” or a wound at the hands of another.

Let’s learn and unlearn from David, a man after God’s own heart.

*“But now your kingdom will not endure; the LORD has sought out a man after his own heart and appointed him ruler of his people, because you have not kept the LORD’S command.” 1 Samuel 13:14*

*The LORD said to Samuel, “How long will you mourn for Saul, since I have rejected him as king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and be on your way; I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem. I have chosen one of his sons to be king.”*

*<sup>2</sup> But Samuel said, “How can I go? If Saul hears about it, he will kill me.”*

*The LORD said, “Take a heifer with you and say, ‘I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.’”<sup>3</sup> Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what to do. You are to anoint for me the one I indicate.”*

*<sup>4</sup> Samuel did what the LORD said. When he arrived at Bethlehem, the elders of the town trembled when they met him. They asked, “Do you come in peace?”*

*<sup>5</sup> Samuel replied, “Yes, in peace; I have come to sacrifice to the LORD. Consecrate yourselves and come to the sacrifice with me.” Then he consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.*

*<sup>6</sup> When they arrived, Samuel saw Eliab and thought, “Surely the LORD’S anointed stands here before the LORD.”*

*<sup>7</sup> But the LORD said to Samuel, “Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I*

*have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”*

*<sup>8</sup> Then Jesse called Abinadab and had him pass in front of Samuel. But Samuel said, “The LORD has not chosen this one either.”<sup>9</sup> Jesse then had Shammah pass by, but Samuel said, “Nor has the LORD chosen this one.”<sup>10</sup> Jesse had seven of his sons pass before Samuel, but Samuel said to him, “The LORD has not chosen these.”<sup>11</sup> So he asked Jesse, “Are these all the sons you have?”*

*“There is still the youngest,” Jesse answered. “He is tending the sheep.”*

*Samuel said, “Send for him; we will not sit down until he arrives.”*

*<sup>12</sup> So he sent for him and had him brought in. He was glowing with health and had a fine appearance and handsome features.*

*Then the LORD said, “Rise and anoint him; this is the one.”*

*<sup>13</sup> So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the LORD came powerfully upon David. Samuel then went to Ramah. 1 Samuel 16:1–13*

Of this text, Charles Swindoll writes:

It’s remarkable, isn’t it, how Jesse reveals two very common mistakes parents make. Number one, he didn’t have an equal appreciation for all of his children. And number two, he failed to cultivate a mutual self-respect among them. Jesse saw his youngest as nothing more than the one who tended the sheep.<sup>2</sup>

wounds. As young boys, we are instilled with an instinctive need to have our identity and worthiness seen, shaped, and affirmed by our parents. When this longing remains unmet, a wound is inflicted and remains open, serving as a primal guide throughout our lives.

John Lynch summarizes a “father wound” this way: “A lack of blessing we expected or anticipated from a father or father-type figure. ‘Someone important to you consistently choosing not to love you.’”

Similarly, Stasi Eldredge encourages men to consider the “mother wound.” Eldredge says boys receive their sense of identity from their father or father figure while our sense of worthiness is instilled by our mothers. In her book *Becoming Myself*, Eldredge writes:

Mothers bestow our self-worth, and they have the ability to withhold it. Intentionally, but more often unintentionally. A mother cannot pass on what she does not possess...Mothers have the ability to withhold acceptance, value, love. Our mothers failed us when, without meaning to, they passed on to us low self-esteem. Or based our self-worth on anything other than the fact that we exist.<sup>3</sup>

These first two wounds, when not healed, stunt a man’s ability to give and receive love. When left unhealed, that man will not only live in a perpetual state of immaturity; he will also stunt the maturity of his children at the very same level.

David includes this cry of his heart in Psalm 27.

*Though my father and mother forsake me, the Lord will receive me.* Psalm 27:10

## REFLECTION

1. Describe your greatest pressure point in learning to live and love in God's healing.

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2. How do you sense your earliest wounds may have been inflicted?

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3. What is the basis of your identity and self-worth?

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4. How do you sense God inviting you to further receive His affirmation, blessing, and rest?

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## PART TWO

David ultimately ascends to the throne. He becomes the most powerful man in the land. As a warrior king, he leads and loves God's people, yet he continues to choose to live in his brokenness rather than in his healing. His wounds have devastating effects on others. Here's one chapter of his story.

*In the spring, at the time when kings go off to war, David sent Joab out with the king's men and the whole Israelite army. They destroyed the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David remained in Jerusalem.*

*<sup>2</sup> One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful, <sup>3</sup> and David sent someone to find out about her. The man said, "She is Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite."<sup>4</sup> Then David sent messengers to get her. She came to him, and he slept with her. (Now she was purifying herself from her monthly uncleanness.) Then she went back home. <sup>5</sup> The woman conceived and sent word to David, saying, "I am pregnant."*

*<sup>6</sup> So David sent this word to Joab: "Send me Uriah the Hittite." And Joab sent him to David. <sup>7</sup> When Uriah came to him, David asked him how Joab was, how the soldiers were and how the war was going. <sup>8</sup> Then David said to Uriah, "Go down to your house and wash your feet." So Uriah left the palace, and a gift from the king was sent after him. <sup>9</sup> But Uriah slept at the entrance to the palace with all his master's servants and did not go down to his house.*

*<sup>10</sup> David was told, "Uriah did not go home." So he asked Uriah, "Haven't you just come from a military campaign? Why didn't you go home?"*

*<sup>11</sup> Uriah said to David, "The ark and Israel and Judah are staying in tents, and my*

*commander Joab and my lord's men are camped in the open country. How could I go to my house to eat and drink and make love to my wife? As surely as you live, I will not do such a thing!"*

*<sup>12</sup> Then David said to him, "Stay here one more day, and tomorrow I will send you back." So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day and the next. <sup>13</sup> At David's invitation, he ate and drank with him, and David made him drunk. But in the evening Uriah went out to sleep on his mat among his master's servants; he did not go home.*

*<sup>14</sup> In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it with Uriah. <sup>15</sup> In it he wrote, "Put Uriah out in front where the fighting is fiercest. Then withdraw from him so he will be struck down and die."*

*<sup>16</sup> So while Joab had the city under siege, he put Uriah at a place where he knew the strongest defenders were. <sup>17</sup> When the men of the city came out and fought against Joab, some of the men in David's army fell; moreover, Uriah the Hittite died.*

*<sup>18</sup> Joab sent David a full account of the battle. <sup>19</sup> He instructed the messenger: "When you have finished giving the king this account of the battle, <sup>20</sup> the king's anger may flare up, and he may ask you, 'Why did you get so close to the city to fight? Didn't you know they would shoot arrows from the wall?' <sup>21</sup> Who killed Abimelek son of Jerub-Besheth? Didn't a woman drop an upper millstone on him from the wall, so that he died in Thebez? Why did you get so close to the wall?' If he asks you this, then say to him, 'Moreover, your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead.'"*

*<sup>22</sup> The messenger set out, and when he arrived he told David everything Joab had sent him to say. <sup>23</sup> The messenger said to David, "The men overpowered us and came out against us in the open, but we drove them back to the entrance of the city gate. <sup>24</sup> Then the archers shot arrows at your servants from the wall, and some of the king's men died. Moreover, your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead."*

*25 David told the messenger, "Say this to Joab: 'Don't let this upset you; the sword devours one as well as another. Press the attack against the city and destroy it.' Say this to encourage Joab."*

*26 When Uriah's wife heard that her husband was dead, she mourned for him. 27 After the time of mourning was over, David had her brought to his house, and she became his wife and bore him a son. But the thing David had done displeased the LORD.*

2 Samuel 11

In Part One, we identified father wounds and mother wounds as two sources of our brokenness. In this text, we see another wound forcefully described: "other wounds."

David, a man after God's own heart, lived in a stunted level of maturity. And from that place, he inflicted the greatest kind of damage.

Consider Bathsheba's immense pain. We often read 2 Samuel 11 in light of David's story; the text, however, reads quite differently from Bathsheba's perspective.

We don't know Bathsheba's posture after being summoned to the palace. We only know of David's crushing brutality following this encounter.

While the father and mother wounds are caused by something being withheld, the "other wound" is caused by something being taken, innocence being stolen, vulnerability being abused, a soul being shattered.

Learning to live in the healing Jesus came to bring doesn't happen in a five-week study. For some, the excruciating trauma of an "other wound" is something we'll continue to learn or unlearn every day for the rest of our lives.

## REFLECTION

1. How does reading this text from Bathsheba's perspective change the way you view her story, David's story, and the overall story of God in 2 Samuel 11?

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2. Where and when have you experienced an "other wound?" How are you learning to live in the healing of such indescribable pain?

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3. This whole story is eventually laid bare. Our stories, too, will one day be open for all to see. The details included in the text are in plain sight, but the wounds are not. What wounds have you inflicted, or what wounds have been inflicted upon you, that you continue to keep hidden?

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4. What one part of your story do you need to unlearn? What part of your story will you live with every day for the rest of your life? Who joins you there?

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## WEEK TWO EXERCISE: HERE I GO AGAIN

Here I Go Again is a description of a shame cycle. There are various kinds of cycles, all with differing causes and outcomes. In our context, a shame cycle is initiated when an open wound is punched, touched, or even grazed. Shame cycles can also occur in places where wounds have been healed. Because shame doesn't follow any logical reaction, even healed places can become susceptible to being reopened.

Using the cycle below as an example, write out your own cycle.



In his book *Unwanted: How Sexual Brokenness Reveals Our Way to Healing*, Jay Stringer writes these powerful words:

Unwanted sexual behavior is not primarily an attempt to remedy or self-soothe the pain of a wounded child. It is attempting to reenact the formative stories of trauma, abuse, and shame that convinced us we were unwanted to begin with. In other words, we are not addicted primarily to sex or even a disordered intimacy; instead, we are bonded to feelings of shame and judgment.

In this way, unwanted sexual behavior is not seeking medication but rather a familiar poison to deaden our imagination that something could change for the better.<sup>4</sup>

## **REFLECTION**

Examine your story, shame cycle, and Stringer's words, and then answer the following questions.

1. What in your story needs to be shared in order for you to learn to live freely and lightly?

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2. What is the “familiar poison that deadens your imagination?”

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3. Do you believe God can change you for the better? If so, what is your starting place in this journey?

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4. What is it you are really afraid of?

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*Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. Romans 12:2*



## SEXUALLY REDEEMED—MY STORY

What emotions accompanied your earliest sexual experience?

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What emotions accompany your sexual experience today?

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## DISCUSSION

*“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.<sup>29</sup> Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.<sup>30</sup> For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”*

Matthew 11:28–30

*Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.* James 5:16

Share as God leads. Use the following questions if they will be helpful.

1. How do you receive Jesus’ invitation to come to Him? Why is He inviting you in?
2. What is causing you to be weary and burdened?
3. What is currently bringing you life that leads to rest?
4. “And you will find rest for your soul.” How might you live in that truth today?
5. How might your brothers join you in prayer and presence?

## **BENEDICTION—DAVID COSTON**

Father, for some of us that word—“father”—may not bring comfort. But it is You, our Lord and Savior, our Heavenly Father, who redeems us and heals our wounds.

Father God, we thank You today for this gathering of men. I pray that You will reveal the wounds that burden us. It can be difficult, even painful to admit that we have been wounded. Allow us to let down our guards in this place and in this fellowship. Allow us to lay down these burdens at the foot of the cross. Allow us to be healed in this moment as we remember that Jesus was wounded and crushed for our sins. He was beaten that we might have peace. He was whipped and we were healed. Thank You for that truth, Father. You know our hearts; each man here carries the scars of our fallen world, and You alone can heal our wounds.

Be with each of us as we go forward in the light of Your transforming love. We pray this in the name of Jesus Christ.

Amen.



*Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. <sup>25</sup> So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord!”*

*But he said to them, “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.”*

*<sup>26</sup> A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” <sup>27</sup> Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.”*

*<sup>28</sup> Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!” John 20:24–28*











# WEEK THREE

WHERE HAVE YOU COME FROM,  
AND WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

## PART ONE

*The angel of the Lord found Hagar near a spring in the desert; it was the spring that is beside the road to Shur. <sup>8</sup> And he said, “Hagar, slave of Sarai, where have you come from, and where are you going?”*

*“I’m running away from my mistress Sarai,” she answered. Genesis 16:7–8*

We’ll learn more about Hagar in a moment. Let’s start in the middle of her story.

Hagar, whose name in Hebrew means “flight,” has fled from the biblical heroes-to-be, Abram and Sarai, and run away to the desert. In Scripture, the desert or wilderness is often the geography of trauma and death. Hagar runs to the wilderness. And here is where God meets her with the most staggering question.

*“Where have you come from, and where are you going?”*

The following statistics regarding sexual brokenness paint a clear picture:

- Approximately 35% of all internet downloads are porn related.
- Porn sites receive more monthly traffic than Netflix, Amazon, and Twitter combined.
- 47% of US families report pornography is a problem in their homes. The use of porn increases the rate of infidelity by 300+%.
- One in three women watches porn at least once a week.
- 68% of churchgoing men view pornography on a regular basis.
- 57% of senior pastors and 64% of youth pastors admit to struggling with pornography use.
- 40% of adult Christians believe pastors who struggle with pornography should be fired or asked to resign.<sup>5</sup>

Pornography is one of the enemy's deadliest tools. Deeper still, the enemy wants to rule and protect the reason why we run away to pornography. The enemy knows if that deeper wound could be healed, our compulsion to run to pornography would change.

This is how Hagar's story begins.

*Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. But she had an Egyptian slave named Hagar; <sup>2</sup> so she said to Abram, "The LORD has kept me from having children. Go, sleep with my slave; perhaps I can build a family through her."*

*Abram agreed to what Sarai said. <sup>3</sup> So after Abram had been living in Canaan ten years, Sarai his wife took her Egyptian slave Hagar and gave her to her husband to be his wife. <sup>4</sup> He slept with Hagar, and she conceived.*

*When she knew she was pregnant, she began to despise her mistress. <sup>5</sup> Then Sarai said to Abram, "You are responsible for the wrong I am suffering. I put my slave in your arms, and now that she knows she is pregnant, she despises me. May the LORD judge between you and me."*

*"Your slave is in your hands," Abram said. "Do with her whatever you think best." Then Sarai mistreated Hagar; so she fled from her. Genesis 16:1–6*

Here's what we know from just a quick read of the text. Hagar is an Egyptian slave. She is given to Abram by his wife Sarai, hoping Hagar will conceive a child so Abram's lineage will begin. Hagar becomes pregnant, and Sarai becomes indignant in her suffering.

*Then Sarai mistreated Hagar.*

"Mistreat" means "to afflict, to oppress, to treat harshly, to abuse."

*So she fled from her.*

Back to the middle of the story.

*The angel of the LORD found Hagar near a spring in the desert; it was the spring that is beside the road to Shur. <sup>8</sup> And he said, “Hagar, slave of Sarai, where have you come from, and where are you going?”*

*“I’m running away from my mistress Sarai,” she answered. Genesis 16:7–8*

## **REFLECTION**

1. Where do you go when you hide?

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2. What is your first response to being mistreated?

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3. When was the last time you ran away? Where did you go physically, emotionally, and spiritually? Why there?

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4. Where have you come from, and where are you going?

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## PART TWO

It's in the wilderness that God finds Adam.

It's in the wilderness that God finds David.

It's in the wilderness that God finds Hagar.

It's in the wilderness that God will find you.

In the geography of our spiritual trauma called pornography, infidelity, workaholism, self-pleasure, self-protection, self-righteousness, addiction, abuse, or even running away to die, God shows up. And when He does show up, how does He speak?

He speaks without accusation. There is no condemnation, no shame. That is not the language of God. Our Savior speaks compassionately, asking, "Where have you come from, and where are you going?"

This is the next scene in Hagar's story.

*Then the angel of the LORD told her, "Go back to your mistress and submit to her."<sup>10</sup> The angel added, "I will increase your descendants so much that they will be too numerous to count."*

<sup>11</sup> *The angel of the LORD also said to her:*

*"You are now pregnant  
and you will give birth to a son.  
You shall name him Ishmael,*

*for the LORD has heard of your misery.  
12 He will be a wild donkey of a man;  
his hand will be against everyone  
and everyone's hand against him,  
and he will live in hostility  
toward all his brothers."*

*13 She gave this name to the LORD who spoke to her: "You are the God who sees me," for she said, "I have now seen the One who sees me." 14 That is why the well was called Beer Lahai Roi; it is still there, between Kadesh and Bered.*

*15 So Hagar bore Abram a son, and Abram gave the name Ishmael to the son she had borne. 16 Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore him Ishmael.  
Genesis 16:9–16*

This text has so much going on. We'll stick with Hagar.

The angel of the LORD continues to talk with Hagar. The angel declares that Hagar's child will be a son, and he prophesies about the son's life. The angel says the child's name will be Ishmael, which means *God hears*.

The angel blesses Hagar.

*"I will increase your descendants so much that they will be too numerous to count." (v. 10)*

Hagar's response is beautiful.

*“You are the God who sees me...I have now seen the One who sees me.” (v. 13)*

In the wilderness, God reveals Himself to us in two ways: He is the God who hears, and He is the God who sees.

Make sure you catch this. In the wilderness, in the place where Hagar has run away to die—it’s here that we learn about the character of God. He is the God who hears and the God who sees. Your wilderness, the place where you go to hide, the place where you look at pornography or the other places you run do not separate you from God. Your wilderness connects you with God.

### **REFLECTION**

1. When was the last time you felt fully seen and fully heard? Describe what that felt like.

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2. The angel blesses Hagar with a promise. What are the foundational promises of God that allow you to rest?

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3. Why does the angel send Hagar back to the place where she was mistreated?  
Why was that necessary?

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4. What if God asked you to go back to the place that is most personal to you?  
What if He asked you to go back to a place where you have been mistreated and  
maligned?

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5. How do you sense that God sees you? How do you sense that He hears you?

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## **WEEK THREE EXERCISE: THE SOUNDTRACK**

The following story has been shared at Sanctuary a few times over the years. It was recently shared and discussed in a DMD group.

I had a really crappy marriage. Some of it was my fault . . . some of it wasn't.

My son is a beautiful boy who is struggling with controlling his temper and showing empathy. He and I are doing our best to love and serve each other. Not every day is perfect, but I'm trying really hard to be a dad that lets him know he is loved by God and me.

I'm called to love people that hate the church.

I'm dating a 41-year-old recovering heroin addict named Anna who has been clean for fifteen years. She has two really cool kids that I love. She is beautiful and tells me often that she loves me, and I can tell by the way she looks at me that she means it. It is a wonderful thing to have common ground, intimacy, and trust with another person. She doesn't just need me; she wants me, too. She enjoys hanging out with me, and when we fight, issues are met head-on and we fight fair.

It really sucks to always be needed but never wanted. It's the loneliest place on earth, I think.

My life is kind of broken up right now. But I'm feeling God's hands around me, and I still feel Him drawing me into His purpose.

God is good.

The DMD group discussed the known reality of a couple of lines in this story.

"She doesn't just need me; she wants me, too."

"It really sucks to always be needed but never wanted. It's the loneliest place on earth, I think."

Confessions began to come from around the room.

"I know exactly what that feels like."

"I felt wanted by a woman in my office; I've never been so close to an affair."

"Me, too."

"That's the soundtrack of my life."

"I'm renaming my playlist 'The Loneliest Place on Earth.'"

Soon the conversation turned to one-sentence phrases that are heard on repeat, especially in moments of being mistreated, misunderstood, self-soothing, self-loathing, or self-protection. Here are a few of the phrases:

I'm always needed but never wanted.  
I am not enough.  
It's my fault.  
I'm too much.  
I'll never get it right.  
I don't matter, anyway.  
I'll never get it together.  
If you only knew.  
You have no idea.  
My love won't change a thing.

Jay Stringer reminds us, "The longer our unwanted sexual behavior persists un-addressed, the more likely it is that we will feel unwanted as well."

## **REFLECTION**

1. What is the one-sentence phrase you hear over and over again?

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2. Where does that phrase take you? What does it lead you to think about?

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3. When did you first began to hear that phrase? What is its source?

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4. What is the one-sentence phrase you'd like to hear over and over again?

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*“The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.”* Psalm 23:1









## DISCUSSION

*“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup> Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup> For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”* Matthew 11:28–30

*Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.* James 5:16

Share as God leads. Use the following questions if they will be helpful.

1. How do you receive Jesus’ invitation to come to Him? Why is He inviting you in?
2. What is causing you to be weary and burdened?
3. What is currently bringing you life that leads to rest?
4. “And you will find rest for your soul.” How might you live in that truth today?
5. How might your brothers join you in prayer and presence?

## **BENEDICTION—JASON CABASSA**

Lord, I come to You broken and empty. You see me in my darkest places, and yet You still love me.

Jesus, help me to continue this fight, as sometimes I feel so lonely in my shame that I'm scared to face the day. I hide so much that it has separated me from my true reality.

Lord, I need You like never before. I pray that in my hurt, in my shame, and in my hidden state, You will continue to fight for me. Help me to continue to see that I'm not in this alone, that You are guiding me through the waters. This fight is a battle in the unseen realm. The devil seeks to entice my thoughts, but You desire to have my heart.

So in my brokenness, in my shame, and in my hurt, I give it all to You. This life is not my own. It's Yours. Have Your way in me, Lord.

Amen.



*Blessed is the one  
whose transgressions are forgiven,  
whose sins are covered.*

<sup>2</sup> *Blessed is the one  
whose sin the LORD does not count against them  
and in whose spirit is no deceit.*

<sup>3</sup> *When I kept silent,  
my bones wasted away  
through my groaning all day long.*

<sup>4</sup> *For day and night  
your hand was heavy on me;  
my strength was sapped  
as in the heat of summer.*

*Then I acknowledged my sin to you  
and did not cover up my iniquity.  
I said, "I will confess  
my transgressions to the LORD."  
And you forgave  
the guilt of my sin.*



*<sup>6</sup> Therefore let all the faithful pray to you  
while you may be found;  
surely the rising of the mighty waters  
will not reach them.*

*<sup>7</sup> You are my hiding place;  
you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance.*  
Psalm 32:1–7

*“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.  
<sup>29</sup> Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in  
heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup> For my yoke is easy and my burden  
is light.” Matthew 11:28–30*





# WEEK FOUR

THERE IS NO FEAR IN LOVE



## PART ONE

*There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. 1 John 4:18*

There is no fear in love.

It's the recognition of nakedness that first causes fear. Adam had been naked his whole life, but at the fall, his eyes were opened (Genesis 3:7). Adam, who once had a perfect relationship with God, is now afraid of God, afraid of Eve...he's even afraid of himself.

*"I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid"*  
(Genesis 3:10).

From that moment, fear became a consequence of sin. And from that moment, God has made a way for us to live and love without fear.

John the Beloved declares this truth, as recorded in 1 John 4:7–21.

*Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. <sup>8</sup> Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. <sup>9</sup> This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. <sup>10</sup> This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. <sup>11</sup> Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. <sup>12</sup> No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.*

*This is how we know that we live in him and he in us: He has given us of his Spirit. <sup>14</sup> And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. <sup>15</sup> If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and*

*they in God. <sup>16</sup> And so we know and rely on the love God has for us.*

*God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. <sup>17</sup> This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like Jesus. <sup>18</sup> There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.*

*We love because he first loved us. <sup>20</sup> Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. <sup>21</sup> And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.*

“Perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment.” Paul echoes these words in his letter to the Romans.

*Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1).*

Man’s greatest desire is to be fully known and fully loved. Man’s greatest fear is to be fully known and fully loved.

The fear of punishment looks different for each of us. The fear of hell, the fear of rejection, the fear of being left, the fear of not being enough, the fear of \_\_\_\_\_.

Sexual brokenness causes men fear more than any other area in our lives. It’s the root of so much of our trauma and shame. God says it doesn’t have to be. Fear doesn’t have to win, not for one more moment.

*God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. 1 John 4:16*



The God of the universe is neither surprised by nor ashamed of the sexual behavior we participate in. Instead, he understands it to be the very stage through which the work of redemption will be played out in our lives. Present sin is the doorway to the wider work of the gospel to bring healing to the wounds of the past and comfort, even power, to the difficulties of the present. Therefore, the sooner we assume a posture of curiosity for our sexual brokenness, the more we will prepare our hearts for the redemptive work ahead.<sup>6</sup>

You don't have to be afraid. He loved you before you ever loved Him. He loves you just as you are, right where you are.

## REFLECTION

1. Is it actually possible to love without fear? What would that sound like to you? What would it feel like? What would it *not* sound like or feel like?

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2. "God is love." Do you believe that about God, or do you believe His character to be anything other than love?

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3. How might it be possible for your sexual brokenness to be “the doorway to the wider work of the gospel to bring healing to the wounds of the past? Describe.

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4. How does giving and receiving love from your brothers and sisters actually bring about deeper healing?

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## PART TWO

Those who struggle most with sexual immorality are not those who have fallen the hardest; they are those who have learned to resign themselves to small doses of unwanted sexual behavior over a lifetime.

We won't allow ourselves to engage in sexual extremities; we know better than that. Instead, we wade into what we believe to be manageable spaces and places of sexual immorality. We curate behavior that, if we were to get caught, would most likely not cost us our relationships or careers. We are too smart for that.

Instead, we slowly deaden our hearts' ability to believe that meaningful change could ever come.

We choose fear.

The gospel is this: We are more sinful and flawed in ourselves than we ever dared believe, yet at the very same time we are more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than we ever dared hope. (Tim Keller, *The Meaning of Marriage*)

*Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.*

Can you, without fear, trust your brother or sister with your sexual brokenness? Can you allow someone to know all of you? Can you trust God with your fear?

In a desire to prove our spiritual worthiness, we rarely allow our small group, or our "brother or sister," to know our whole selves. We either self-deprecate, or we share just enough to keep them close.



This is why accountability rarely helps us move past sexual sin. The law will never bring freedom. “Lust management,” like blocking software, is a good thing, but it will only take us so far. For most men, accountability hasn’t worked because fear has deadened our courage to be honest. What is needed is a place—a person, a community—where we can accept our brokenness, not with shame and self-hate, but with dignity. Our sexual expressions are indicators of our longing for true intimacy. God-given intimacy. The kind of intimacy and vulnerability that allows for love to be freely given and received. The kind of love in which there is no fear.

## REFLECTION

1. How has fear deadened your heart?

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2. What role has traditional accountability had in growing you in Christlikeness?

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3. How has “lust management” freed you, or how has it held you in ever-increasing bondage?

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4. In what current relationship do you sense a real peace, a relationship where “there is no fear in love”?

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## **THE SERENITY PRAYER**

God, give me grace to accept with serenity  
the things that cannot be changed,  
Courage to change the things which should be changed,  
and the wisdom to distinguish the one from the other.  
Living one day at a time,  
Enjoying one moment at a time,  
Accepting hardship as a pathway to peace,  
Taking, as Jesus did,  
This sinful world as it is,  
Not as I would have it,  
Trusting that You will make all things right  
If I surrender to Your will  
So that I may be reasonably happy in this life  
and supremely happy with You forever in the next.  
Amen.

## WEEK FOUR EXERCISE: THE BILLY GRAHAM RULES

In 1948, Billy Graham began a series of evangelistic meetings in Modesto, California. Through a series of conversations about ministry life and its challenges, his ministry team resolved to uphold the highest standard of biblical morality and integrity.

In the following excerpt from his autobiography *Just As I Am*, Billy Graham went into further detail about the resolutions these men made in terms of financial integrity, sexual morality, publicity, and partnership with the local church. Their resolutions became known as “The Modesto Manifesto.”

One afternoon during the Modesto meetings, I called the Team together to discuss the problem. Then I asked them to go to their rooms for an hour and list all the problems they could think of that evangelists and evangelism encountered.

When they returned, the lists were remarkably similar, and in a short amount of time, we made a series of resolutions or commitments among ourselves that would guide us in our future evangelistic work. In reality, it was more of an informal understanding among ourselves—a shared commitment to do all we could to uphold the Bible’s standard of absolute integrity and purity for evangelists.

The first point on our combined list was money. Nearly all evangelists at that time—including us—were supported by love offerings taken at the meetings. The temptation to wring as much money as possible out of an audience, often with strong emotional appeals, was too great for some evangelists. In addition, there was little or no accountability for finances. It was a system that was easy to

abuse—and led to the charge that evangelists were in it only for the money.

I had been drawing a salary from YFC [Youth for Christ] and turning all offerings from YFC meetings over to YFC committees, but my new independent efforts in citywide Campaigns required separate finances. In Modesto we determined to do all we could to avoid financial abuses and to downplay the offering and depend as much as possible on money raised by the local committee in advance.

The second item on the list was the danger of sexual immorality. We all knew of evangelists who had fallen into immorality while separated from their families by travel. We pledged among ourselves to avoid any situation that would have even the appearance of compromise or suspicion. From that day on, I did not travel, meet, or eat alone with a woman other than my wife. We determined that the Apostle Paul's mandate to the young pastor Timothy would be ours as well: "Flee ... youthful lusts" (2 Timothy 2:22, KJV).

Our third concern was the tendency of many evangelists to carry on their work apart from the local church, even to criticize local pastors and churches openly and scathingly. We were convinced, however, that this was not only counterproductive but also wrong from the Bible's standpoint. We were determined to cooperate with all who would cooperate with us in the public proclamation of the Gospel, and to avoid an antichurch or anticlergy attitude.

The fourth and final issue was publicity. The tendency among some evangelists was to exaggerate their successes or to claim higher attendance numbers than they really had. This likewise discredited evangelism and brought the whole enterprise under suspicion. It often made the press so suspicious of evangelists that they refused to take notice of their work. In Modesto we committed ourselves to integrity in our publicity and our reporting.

So much for the Modesto Manifesto, as Cliff [Barrows] called it in later years. In reality, it did not mark a radical departure for us; we had always held these principles. It did, however, settle in our hearts and minds, once and for all, the determination that integrity would be the hallmark of both our lives and our ministry.<sup>7</sup>

Billy Graham and his ministry changed the world forever. The Kingdom of God advanced as Billy Graham and his team followed Christ at every step.

Yet toward the end of Graham's life, he wrote these words: "All of my life I was taught how to die as a Christian, but no one ever taught me how I ought to live in the years before I die."

There is a dynamic difference between living "in the fear of God" and living in fear. Many of us who were raised with the "Billy Graham Rules" and the culture of the purity movement missed the fullness of God expressed in sexuality. Our relationships with women were inhibited as we were taught how to live in the fear of God but not accurately taught how to live in the freedom that Jesus came to bring (John 10:10).

Instead of being arrested by rules that restrict us, keeping us from seeing and knowing the Triune God because we have disconnected from part of His body, why not develop rules that bring us life? Why not become different kinds of people—people whose choices accurately reflect the will and the ways of God, people who live in the reality that "up there has come down here" in all aspects of our being and doing?



1. Today, and in this next season of life, where/how would you like to learn to live?

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2. What is one rule you to which you hold fast? What is one rule that has frustrated you your entire life?

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3. Describe a season in your life when you attempted to live with “lust management.” What was the outcome of that season?

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4. Have you been primarily ruled by fear or guided by fear as it relates to your relationship with women? Describe the difference.

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Jay Stringer reminds us of the Good News.

Approaches to healing that are centered on what is wrong with us will never lead to the type of transformation we desire and deserve. The gospel teaches us that we are beloved before any sexual sin or addiction entered our lives, and we remain so, even at the height of our brokenness.<sup>8</sup>

*It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.* Galatians 5:1



## SEXUALLY REDEEMED—MY STORY

Think of a time when you felt the beauty of your body or your sexuality. What images or scenes emerge for you?

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How does God's view of you and His love for you lead you to rest more completely in His grace?

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## DISCUSSION

*“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup> Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup> For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”*

Matthew 11:28–30

*Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective. James 5:16*

Share as God leads. Use the following questions if they will be helpful.

1. How do you receive Jesus' invitation to come to Him? Why is He inviting you in?
2. What is causing you to be weary and burdened?
3. What is currently bringing you life that leads to rest?
4. “And you will find rest for your soul.” How might you live in that truth today?
5. How might your brothers join you in prayer and presence?



## **BENEDICTION—RANDY ELSTER**

Lord Jesus,

Thank You that because of Your sacrifice on the cross, I can have intimacy with You and with the Father. Thank You that You look at me not with condemnation, but with joy and love. When You look at me, You smile. And You smile big. I want to dwell in that intimacy and walk in the garden with You. I want to know the pleasure that You have in me. I want to know Your love, a love that gives without hesitation, without reservation. I want to give that love and receive it. I want to be known and yet loved unhesitatingly, as You love.

I draw near to You, Lord Jesus, to learn what true intimacy really is.

In Your name I pray and continue the conversation,

Amen.

## THE HIGH PRIESTLY PRAYER

*“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message,<sup>21</sup> that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.<sup>22</sup> I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—<sup>23</sup> I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.*

*<sup>24</sup> “Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.*

*<sup>25</sup> “Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me.<sup>26</sup> I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them.” John 17:20–26*









# WEEK FIVE

COMFORT FOR US; COMFORT FOR OTHERS



*Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort,<sup>4</sup> who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.*  
2 Corinthians 1:3–4

## PART ONE

*“In this world you will have trouble.”*

Jesus said these words in the last week of His life. The disciples had no idea the kind of trouble they would soon face.

*“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”* John 16:33

Paul would later remind a struggling Corinthian church that God is the Father of compassion and the God of *all* comfort, the God who comforts us in *all* our troubles.

Our God is the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort. He desires for us to live in His peace.

The writer of Hebrews speaks this truth about our Great High Priest, Jesus.

*Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess.<sup>15</sup> For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.<sup>16</sup> Let us then approach God’s throne of*

*grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.* Hebrews 4:14–16

Our High Priest is able to empathize with our weakness. In Him, we receive mercy and find grace to help us.

Let's put it all together.

Our God desires for us to live in His peace. Our God is the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort. Our God comforts us in all our troubles. Our God isn't surprised or disappointed by our weakness; rather, He empathizes with our weaknesses (plural). Because He has been tempted in every way and yet was without sin, and because He has overcome the world, He now freely gives us a pathway to live more fully in His peace. He gives us mercy and grace to help us in our time of need.

This is the God who loved us first, while we were yet sinners. This is the God we serve.

In Paul's letter to the church at Corinth, he makes sure the church knows that God is the God of all comfort. Then Paul takes it one step further: the comfort we receive is not solely for us. Notice the breadth of God's perfect plan as spoken through Paul.

*The God of all comfort...comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.*

2 Corinthians 1:3b–4

God comforts us so we can comfort others.

If there is one area of life in which the mature need to speak into the lives of the immature, it is in this space of sexual brokenness. Identity, shame, sexual proclivities, abuse, doubt—all of this brokenness can be comforted by the God of all comfort who

asks those who have been comforted to partner with Him in comforting and blessing others.

Jesus said to His disciples, and specifically to Peter, “I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it” (Matthew 16:18).

Every time a man is left alone in his troubles, Hell overcomes. Every time a man abuses or is haunted by abuse, Hell overcomes. Every time a man thinks of sex and consequently feels damaged and ruined, Hell overcomes. Every time a man feels he is ruled and reigned by his appetites, open wounds, and lust, Hell overcomes. Every time a man believes he should be strong enough to “fix it,” Hell overcomes. Hell wins every time a man believes anything other than the truth that he is the beloved.

*...so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.*

## **REFLECTION**

1. In what part of your life have you been comforted by the Father of all compassion, the God of all comfort?

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2. Where do you sense trouble in your life? How does that trouble motivate you or paralyze you?

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3. How has God used another person to bring comfort to you?

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4. Who is God inviting you to partner with—with His help—to empathize in weakness and bring comfort?

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## PART TWO

The film *The Heart of Man* is the timeless tale of a father's relentless pursuit of his son, interwoven with interviews on brokenness, identity, and shame.

A group of 20-somethings recently gathered to watch this movie. Its impact on the group was powerful; it was palpable. The movie is not perfect, but it does give a wider lens to the parable of Jesus as told in Luke 15.

At Sanctuary, we believe in the intimate dynamic of relationship. This film helps portray the call for men to not just grow in their own faith, but to grow “in Christ for the sake of others.”

In his book *The Gift of Being Yourself*, David Benner calls us back to the community of our Triune God.

Moving truths such as “God loves me” from our head to our heart is often difficult. It is possible, but only as we journey with others. The God who is Divine community is known only in human community. Deep knowing of perfect love, just like deep knowing of ourselves, demands that we be in relationships of spiritual friendship. No one should ever expect to make the journey alone.<sup>9</sup>

After the movie, we'll share our own sexual stories.









## **WEEK FIVE EXERCISE: THE PLACE MOST PERSONAL**

While tending his father-in-law's sheep in "the far side of the wilderness," Moses is called by God. You know the story. Burning bush, holy ground, "I AM." From the bush that is not consumed by the fire, God calls Moses back to the place that is most personal to him, the place where he was raised. The place where he experienced injustice, slavery, and the dehumanization of his people—God's people. The place where Moses killed a man. The place from where he ran. God said, "So now, go" (Exodus 3:10).

Many years ago, Rudy and Katie Gleason were called to orphans and the vulnerable in Ethiopia. It was a place most personal to them. Jay and Tracy Arntzen were called to orphans and the vulnerable in Cambodia. This too was a calling most personal to them. It was a different kind of call than the Gleasons', but it was unmistakably God's voice that called them. A bunch of years ago, Craig and Kristy Bowler began Sanctuary. It was a calling most personal to them.

The place most personal is usually a place or a people where pain was experienced on a very deep level. For Moses, the pain was the oppression of his people in Egypt. For Rudy and Katie, the pain was the death of their infant daughter in Ethiopia as she awaited adoption. For Craig and Kristy, the pain was the breakdown of the local church.

## REFLECTION

1. Where is “the place most personal” for you? Who is it? What is it? Note your response below. If you are unsure, try using the prompts below to help you discern your most personal place.

- What is a biblical truth that drives your deepest convictions?
- Why does that truth compel you so passionately?
- What wrong have you experienced in your life that God might want to use to ensure the same wrong doesn't occur in the lives of others?
- Where do you find yourself most at home?
- What is the one thing that brings you life to the full?
- If there was one thing to which you could give the rest of your life, what would it be?

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*“Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. <sup>8</sup> Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. <sup>9</sup> Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.”*

Joshua 1:7–9

## **BENEDICTION—SCOTT HELLMAN**

God, thank You for who You are. You are a good, good Father who is always present, always faithful, and always loving. May Your truth open my heart to who You say that I am and who You have made me to be.

Father, there is so much in my past and so much in my life today that brings me to my knees. So much failure, so much hurt, so much pain...and it's all from choices I have made. I have so many regrets and so much I wish I could do over. Today, Jesus—right now, Jesus—I turn these over to You. I turn over the lies, the shame, and the guilt. I pray that I can find comfort in who You are and who You say that I am. I pray that this comfort will open my heart and my soul to live the life You have called me to live and to be the man, the father, and the son You have created me to be. God, I pray that I not only receive Your comfort, but that I believe in Your comfort and find rest in it.

Father, I pray that through Your truth, my belief in You, and through Your comfort, You will use me to comfort others around me. God, use my story—the one You are still writing in me—to bring comfort and healing to my brothers. I pray You will open my eyes to see others as You see them. Open my heart to be filled with more of You so I may love others as You love me, loving with compassion and without judgment or comparison. I pray You will use me to speak against the guilt, the shame, and the lies of the evil one. Fill my words and actions with Your truth so that it will bring comfort to others.

Father, I sing your praises on high!

Amen.

*Be merciful to those who doubt;<sup>23</sup> save others by snatching them from the fire; to others show mercy, mixed with fear—hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh.*

*<sup>24</sup> To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy—<sup>25</sup> to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen. Jude 22–25*





# APPENDIX A

## **STATEMENT ON SEX AND SEXUALITY**

The following statement aims to provide a wholistic and elevated view of sex that honors God's intentions and design for human sexuality while standing in contrast to views that relegate sex to a bodily act devoid of any spiritual meaning. This statement distinguishes what Scripture affirms and upholds about the meaning and purposes of sex in the Christian worldview, not merely what we deny or understand as mere transgression.

### **THE LORDSHIP OF CHRIST IN SEX AND SEXUALITY**

We confess that Jesus Christ is Lord over all things, including sex (1 Corinthians 6:13). Therefore, our understanding of sex and sexuality is received from God through Scripture as our final authority for belief and practice (1 Thessalonians 4:8). Non-biblical interpretations of sex and sexuality, which interpret sex in terms of human authority, are at odds with the Lordship of Christ (1 Thessalonians 4:3–5). They must be critiqued and resisted by God's people. The Lordship of Christ compels all of His followers to believe and live by the following in regard to sex and sexuality.

### **GOD'S TRIFOLD DESIGN OF SEX AND SEXUALITY**

God's purpose for sexual union includes a trifold design consisting of three dimensions that are intertwined, interdependent, and complementary: the consummation of the

marriage covenant, procreation, and pleasure.

*Sex consummates marriage* as the physical sign and seal of the covenantal partnership (Genesis 2:18) or marital love (Malachi 2:14), creating a new family unit (Genesis 2:23–24; Ephesians 5:31). It is the sign act that ratifies and continually affirms the ongoing exclusive life commitment and love (Song of Songs 2:16; 1 Corinthians 7:39) between two persons, male and female, as one flesh (Genesis 2:24–25; Song of Songs 8:6–7; Matthew 19:4–6).

*Sex is for procreation* (Malachi 2:15), fulfilling the mandate to be fruitful and multiply (Genesis 1:28), by which the one-flesh union of husband and wife creates a new, holy life (1 Corinthians 7:14) and ensouled body.

*Sex is a unique expression of the human experience of intimacy* (Song of Songs 4:16) and pleasure (Song of Songs 1:4). It is an expression of our design in the image of a relational God (John 17:21–23) which reflects His wholehearted love and forwards His intentions for humans to experience the pleasure of relational and physical intimacy (Song of Songs 5:4–5).

## **GOD'S PURPOSE FOR SEX AND SEXUALITY**

We believe that sex is one expression of the many ways God has created us in His image. We believe that God has created human beings as male and female (Genesis 1:27) and that our sexuality is an expression of His unique capacity for relationship, as is found in the Trinity. As a result, we believe there are specific implications for sex and sexuality, as we are made in the image of a Triune God according to His specific design.

Sex and sexuality are good and holy (Genesis 2:23–24; Hebrews 13:4). We believe that our desire for sex and our sexuality reflects how we are made in the image of a Triune God who exists in the relationship between Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit (John

17:21), and that human sexuality reflects the relational intimacy and capacity of God.

We understand that sex is an expression of how God has designed us but is not essential to our meaningful existence. Life is meaningful and good without sex (John 10:10; 1 Corinthians 7:1). In our future resurrected state, sex and marriage will be no more (Matthew 22:30). Sex, as a sacramental sign of the divine-human relationship, becomes unnecessary upon the consummation of the marital union of Christ and us, His bride (Ephesians 5:31–32; Revelation 19:7).

Like all creation, we believe that sex and sexuality have been distorted by the fall of mankind (sin's impact on disfiguring God's design). These fallen expressions of sex or sexuality begin in the mind in the form of lust and are externalized as outward actions of the body. They include adultery, pornography, polygamy, premarital sex, homosexual sex, sexual assault or abuse, pedophilia, bestiality, incest, and the like (Exodus 20:14; Leviticus 19:29; Romans 1:26–27; 1 Thessalonians 4:3–7; Hebrews 13:4). We believe that expressions of sexuality such as these are not part of God's design.

## **AFFIRMATION OF SEX AND SEXUALITY**

We affirm that the proper Scriptural context for the expression of human sexuality can take place only within the boundaries of a monogamous marriage between a biological man and a biological woman. Only within the context of this marriage can the sexual relationship take place without violating God's Scriptural design and purpose. In this context, it fulfills the purposes of sex as an expression of permanent and exclusive commitment until death, open to the possibility of conceiving a child, and enjoying the pleasures of intimacy. Furthermore, we believe that sex within the covenant of an exclusive heterosexual marriage is a temporary symbol which points to the second coming of Christ. When Jesus returns, He will unite God with all His people in the same way sex unites two different human beings (a man and a woman) in one human union.

From this biblical-theological understanding, Sanctuary draws its grace-filled teaching and practice on sex and sexuality.



# NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Gene Edwards, *The Divine Romance* (Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1993), 66–67
- <sup>2</sup> Charles Swindoll, *Great Lives: David* (Thomas Nelson, 1997), 20
- <sup>3</sup> Stasi Eldredge, *Becoming Myself: Embracing God's Dream of You* (David C. Cook, 2013), 76
- <sup>4</sup> Jay Stringer, *Unwanted: How Sexual Brokenness Reveal Our Way to Healing* (NavPress, 2018), 11
- <sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, various pages
- <sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 28–29
- <sup>7</sup> Billy Graham, *Just As I Am: The Autobiography of Billy Graham* (HarperCollins Worldwide and Zondervan, 2007), 128–129
- <sup>8</sup> Stringer, *Unwanted*, 6
- <sup>9</sup> David G. Benner, *The Gift of Being Yourself: The Sacred Call to Self-Discovery* (InterVarsity Press, 2015), 49



700 Mars Hill Road  
Kennesaw, GA 30152